

Better Homes and Centers



Michigan Department of
Social Services

Going Outdoors

Issue 39

SPRING 1995

MAKING THE GROUNDS SAFE IN PLAYGROUNDS

*Jim Sinnamon
Licensing Consultant
Macomb County*

Outdoor playgrounds can be wonderful places for children! Good playgrounds allow children to practice and enhance their gross motor skills, their social skills and their imaginations. In other words, a good playground will challenge children and invite them to take managed risks. The question then arises: How do you balance the need for a challenging playground environment with the need for providing a safe playground environment?

While there are many ingredients for making an outdoor play area safe, one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of serious injury is to install an appropriate surface in and around the playground. Over the past 15 years, studies examining the issue of playground safety have determined that the most common accident occurring on playgrounds is a fall from playground equipment onto the surface below the equipment. Therefore, a resilient fall surface under playground equipment is necessary.

The U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) published the *Handbook for Public Playground Safety* in 1991. They tested and evaluated various surfacing materials. While no surface material will be able to completely eliminate the risk of injury from falls, several types of surfacing materials can significantly reduce the potential for serious, life-threatening injuries.

The first category is **inorganic materials**. Included in this category are sand and pea gravel. Both can be excellent surfacing materials. They are inexpensive and easy to obtain. However, to maintain their impact reducing characteristics, regular maintenance is required. Sand tends to pack down with use. When wet it loses much of its resiliency. Both sand and pea gravel can be thrown by the children. Both tend to spread out of the playground area and onto sidewalks and grassy areas.

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DIRECTOR'S CORNER

I have commented several times that the Division of Child Day Care Licensing has been working on revising the Licensing Rules for Child Day Care Centers. Act 116 of the Public Acts of 1973, as amended, requires that rules be reviewed every five years. The lengthy and complicated rule-making process, even for the revision of existing rules, can take several years from beginning to end.

The process begins with the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee.

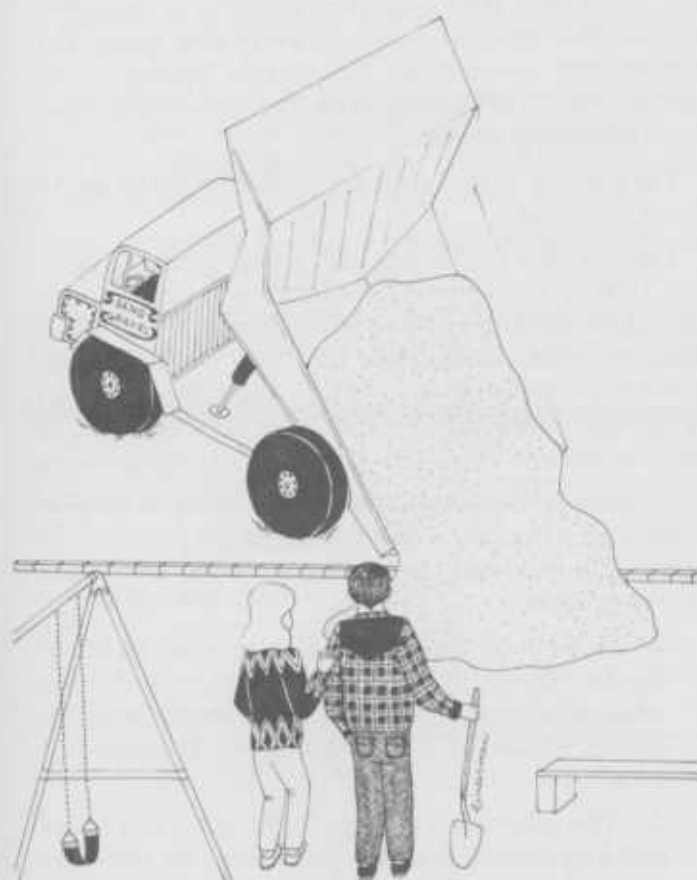
The Ad Hoc Committee met monthly from February, 1994 to November, 1994 resulting in recommendations to the Department. Since November, a small Division review committee has been meeting semi-monthly to complete the arduous and tedious task of numerous proofreadings and clarifying rewrites in order to put the rules into the required format.

As soon as the proposed rules are ready to be presented, the next step in the promulgation process will begin. The following represents a simplified version of this process:

1. Review of the proposed rules must be made by the Bureau of Regulatory Services and other administrations within the Department plus approval given by the Department Director. (3 months)
2. The rules must then go to the Office of Rules and Regulations recently established by the Governor to review and approve all proposed rules. This step could result in further editing and redrafting.
3. Next comes an informal review by the Legislative Service Bureau (LSB) and the Attorney General (AG). (4-6 weeks)
4. Then there is a redraft incorporating LSB/AG editing/suggestions. (2 months)
5. Proposed rules must then be published in the Michigan Register. (2 months)

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The second category is **organic loose materials**, such as wood chips and bark mulch. These materials require a method of containment, for example, a retaining barrier. Maintenance is important if the cushioning characteristics are to be preserved. Advantages of these organic materials include their low initial cost, availability and ease of installation. Like sand and pea gravel, the cushioning potential of wood mulch and chips may be reduced by environmental conditions (rain, icy conditions, wind). These organic materials may deteriorate and rot in wet weather. Wood chips and wood mulch are also easily thrown by children at each other.



The third category is **synthetic materials**. Included in this category are shredded tires, rubber mats and poured-in-place urethane and rubber compositions. These materials generally have low maintenance. They usually provide a consistent resiliency. Each manufacturer has slightly different materials, resulting in differences in critical fall heights. Unitary surfaces also ensure that playgrounds will be accessible to children with disabilities, as required by the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act. Unfortunately, these surfaces are quite expensive to install.

Asphalt and concrete are not acceptable as surfacing materials under equipment. Hard packed dirt is another unacceptable surfacing material. It can become wet and muddy in rainy weather and freeze solid in the winter. While grass may be a satisfactory surface, many factors can reduce its acceptability. Heavy traffic tends to decrease the thickness of grass, diminishing the shock absorbency of the surface. Moisture and dew can prevent use of the playground.

In addition to the type of surface material used, the **depth** of the ground cover is equally important. The CPSC has also studied and identified the critical height of surfacing materials. The critical height is the maximum height a child could fall onto a surface without sustaining a *life-threatening* head injury. The following table summarizes the critical height of a variety of surfaces:

Surface Material	Approximate Height of Fall to Receive Concussion
Concrete	less than 12 inches
Packed earth	2 feet
3 cm rubber mat	4 feet
6 cm rubber mat	8 feet
Chopped tires, 4" deep	9 feet
6" of wood chips	10 feet
12" of wood chips	11 feet
10" of pea gravel	11 feet
12" of sand	12 feet
Chopped tires, 6" deep	14 feet

Put another way, a 12 foot fall onto sand would result in the same impact as a 2 foot fall onto packed earth, or a 12 inch fall onto asphalt or concrete!

With planning and preparation, your playground can be exciting for the children and still be safe. Consider developing partnerships with others interested in early childhood education to improve your playground. Through partnerships with school administrators, community organizations, other providers and parents, and the state, we can achieve this important standard.

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CHALLENGING PLAYGROUNDS — SAFE PLAYGROUNDS A SAFETY CHECKLIST

Kathleen Nixon
Licensing Consultant
Child Day Care Licensing

Extending your classroom to the outside environment can be fun and challenging. It can offer children the opportunity for some healthy risk taking without putting them at undue risk. To provide for this healthy risk taking, safety issues must be addressed. This involves the cooperation of everyone — administrators, caregivers and volunteers. Establishing a routine system for checking for hazards is necessary to maintain a safe outdoor play area. Below is a helpful checklist which can be utilized by all staff.

General Playground Hazards Checklist

	Yes	No		Yes	No
1. Are there broken or missing hand-rails or protective barriers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	14. Are the swings too high off the ground to allow children to easily get on and off?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Are there damaged benches or fences with holes that could lead to head entrapment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	15. Are the swings closer than 18 inches from each other <i>and</i> the support frame?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Are there sharp protrusions on the fence or gate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	16. Are there metal slides that are unprotected from direct sun?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Are there crush or grind points between moving pieces?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	17. Are there any obstacles or hazards in the fall zone around playground equipment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Are there sharp points, corners or edges (i.e., bolts, hooks, metal and screws) on equipment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	18. Is there an inadequate depth of protective surface cover under the equipment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Are there wood splinters or protruding nails or parts?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	19. Do paved bike trails contain loose gravel, stones or other debris?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Are there missing or damaged protective caps or plugs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	20. Is there debris, litter or garbage not secured in waterproof, tight-fitting garbage containers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Are there clothing entanglement hazards such as open S-hooks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	21. Is there broken glass or animal droppings in the play area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Are there trip hazards such as exposed footings, rocks or roots?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	22. Are there uncovered sandboxes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Are there rusted, rotted or cracked surfaces or equipment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	23. Are there any hidden areas where children can play (tunnels, bushes, small structures)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Is there any unstable or loosely anchored equipment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	24. Are children unsupervised by caregivers during outdoor play?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Are there moving parts that are worn, such as swing bearing hangers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
13. Are there loose or worn connecting, covering or fastening hardware devices (S-hooks at both ends of swing)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			

Please duplicate and use this checklist for assessing playground safety.

A SAFE PLACE TO PLAY

Judy Acker-Smith, Parent
Kalamazoo County

Watch children on a playground! They seek adventure with friends, choose to take risks and enjoy being challenged by greater height, speed and distance. They move quickly from one challenge to the next and will inevitably use equipment in unintended ways! Children are at the mercy of the playgrounds that are provided. They are especially vulnerable to serious injuries because their physical skills are still developing and they are often unaware of dangerous situations. It is the responsibility of parents, child care centers, day care homes, schools and parks departments to provide playgrounds that challenge our children's abilities not their survival!

More than 267,000 playground related injuries are treated in hospital emergency rooms each year! This number does not even account for the many playground injuries that do not require hospital care. Injuries include broken bones, lacerations, concussions, spinal injuries and strangulations. At least 17 children die each year as a result of playground accidents! With knowledge of playground safety and design, we can greatly reduce the frequency and severity of playground accidents.

Approximately 75% of all playground accidents are due to *falls*. The highest percentage involve falls onto a hard surface (asphalt, concrete, grass, hard-packed dirt) and secondly, onto another part of the same piece of equipment. The "potential fall height" is determined by adding the height of the platform to the height of the average child (3-4 feet). Thus, a fall from a 4 foot platform would have a "potential fall height" of 7-8 feet. Children under the age of 6 do not have the motor and cognitive skills to break a fall with their arms, so they are more likely to suffer head injuries, while older children suffer more broken arms. A four foot fall to a hard surface can be fatal. Therefore, providing a protective, shock-absorbing surface is the most crucial safety factor on playgrounds!

To reduce the risk of severity of injuries, a "fall zone" is essential. This is the area under and around equipment where a child might fall or exit from equipment. Specific fall zones are:

Stationary and climbing equipment: Minimum of 6 feet in all directions from the perimeter of the equipment.

Swings: Two times the height of the top rail extending to both the front and rear; 6 feet from the perimeter of the side supports.

Tire swings: Minimum of 6 feet beyond the swing extension.

Slides: The height of the slide plus 4 feet at the slide exit; minimum of 6 feet to the rear and sides of the slide.

There are many types of surfacing available (sand, pea gravel, wood mulch, etc.), each with advantages and disadvantages. To provide protection from falls, *the shock-absorbing surface must be maintained at depths of 9 inches to 12 inches*. The surface a child falls onto can be the critical difference between a serious injury and a minor bruise! Sand is the least expensive and therefore the most widely used. Pea gravel, however, has been the top choice for many schools and parks because it drains well, does not attract cats (like sand), does not decompose or harbor bacteria (like wood mulch) and does not compact or freeze in the winter (like sand and wood mulch).

The two most comprehensive documents regarding playground safety and design are the 1991 U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission Guidelines for Public Playground Safety (CPSC) and the 1994 American Society for Testing and Materials Safety Standards (ASTM). Both are referred to in lawsuits involving playground accidents. CPSC does not endorse the guidelines as the sole method to minimize playground injuries, however. There are many factors which affect playground safety.

Equipment that meets CPSC guidelines still must be evaluated. When considering the purchase of equipment, remember that children use equipment in unintended ways. Always ask yourself "How will my children play on this?" The equipment should allow for an "obstruction-free" fall, with no internal pieces that a child could fall onto from a height of 18 inches or more. Equipment should also allow for an adult to reach and remove a child who is seriously hurt.

The best playground designs are:

- **Safe** — conforming to the CPSC guidelines and ASTM standards.
- **Accessible** — to those children with disabilities, providing play opportunities for all children and meeting the Americans with Disabilities Act

(ADA) requirements regarding ramp width and incline, barriers, transfer points, handrails, etc.

- **Complex** — providing a variety of activities and adventures.
- **Linked** — connecting structures to form a natural flow of children from one activity to the next.
- **Social** — fostering cooperation, problem solving, decision making, language development and social interaction rather than solitary play experiences.
- **Flexible** — encouraging creative and imaginative play with structures that can be used in many different ways.
- **Challenging** — providing for risk-taking and the development of endurance, balance, flexibility, agility and upper body strength.
- **Developmental** — providing equipment appropriate for a wide range of ages and abilities. For preschoolers (ages 2-5), CPSC does not recommend seesaws, sliding poles and arch climbers (their ability to climb develops before their ability to descend).

Additional playground safety and design considerations include:

- Place swings on the outer edge of the play area. Each bay should have only 2 swings, with a minimum of 24 inches between each swing and a minimum of 30 inches between each swing and the supporting upright. Light weight rubber swings are safest. Heavy animal swings should be removed.
- The minimum distance is 30 inches between a tire swing at full horizontal extension and the supporting post.
- Slides should be located in the shade or face north to prevent burns caused by direct sun. The top platform should be at least 22 inches long and as wide as the slide, with no openings between the platform and the slide bed. *Remove drawstrings from coats and hoods to prevent the possibility of strangulation on slides.*
- Install protective barriers on surfaces that are higher than 30 inches (older children) or 20 inches (preschool).
- Place equipment so that there is a safe flow from one activity to the next; all areas are visible for supervision; and it is away from soccer, baseball and football fields.

- Install a fence or other barrier if the play area is adjacent to a street. Equipment must be a minimum of 8 feet from all fences.
- Install signs that indicate proper use of equipment and need for supervision.
- Teeter-totters and merry-go-rounds are not advised because they pose undue risks with little developmental value. Also not recommended are trapeze bars, trampolines, rope swings that may form a loop, roller slides and exercise rings.

Some playground injuries result from risk-taking, where a child identifies a challenge, and then chooses to attempt it. By installing safe equipment and fall zones, the frequency and severity of these injuries can be reduced. However, most injuries result from hazards. Hazards are not obvious to children and therefore the potential for injury is hidden. Safety inspections will eliminate hazardous conditions before they become accidents. Inspections should be scheduled on a regular, frequent basis and well documented. First, make a list of the hazardous conditions. Then develop a prioritized plan to eliminate them based on the resources available. Potential hazards to be aware of are:

- Lack of a fall zone with a shock-absorbing surface maintained at depths of 9 inches to 12 inches.
- Any openings *more than 3.5 inches and less than 9 inches* that could trap a child's head or cause strangulation.
- Exposed cement footing and equipment not securely anchored.
- Protruding bolt ends that do not have protective caps.
- Sharp edges, points or corners that could cut or puncture.
- Pinch or crush points or angles less than 55 degrees that could catch clothing and cause possible serious injury or strangulation.
- Open "S" hooks.

Most adults assume that children are safe on playgrounds, yet emergency room statistics on playground injuries are alarming! Take the time to inspect the safety of your children's playground, before a serious injury occurs. Your efforts could save a life!

More information is available from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission Handbook: CPSC, Washington, D.C. 20207.

WHEN THE BEE STINGS

Roger Grates, Beekeeper

FACT: In the United States, more people die from bee or wasp stings than from snake bites.

Over 2,000 varieties of bees exist in the world. Honey bees will sting if they or their hive are threatened. People in our area are most likely to be stung by yellow jackets or wasps because of their attraction to soft drinks and foods humans consume. They are also attracted by cosmetics and perfumes.

The first typical reaction to a sting is an investigation of the afflicted area. If the stinger is still embedded in the skin, the second typical reaction is to pinch the stinger between the thumb and index finger to pull it out of the skin. ***This is the wrong technique.*** The correct method for removing the stinger is to scrape it off with a fingernail or other flat edged objects starting at the base of the stinger.

The reason the stinger should be scraped off is that it is really a subassembly of the stinger, poison sac and muscles surrounding the poison sac. If the stinger is left embedded in the skin, the muscles surrounding the poison sac continue to contract for up to half an hour. If you pinch the stinger and poison sac subassembly to remove it, you are really injecting the venom. Remember, ***scrape the stinger off.***

If the afflicted person starts to show an allergic reaction, get professional help immediately. The reaction may take the form of acute respiratory depression. The individual may turn blue. Temperature may elevate. Severe burning or stinging may take place some distance from the site of the sting. Should the person go into cardiac arrest (this can happen fast in extreme cases), CPR should be administered.

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KEEPING THE FUN IN OUTDOOR PLAY

Elaine Houston, Licensing Consultant
Kent County

Outdoor play in the summertime means sun, wind, water, collecting insects, picnics and fun. It also can mean sunburns, flies and mosquitoes, skinned knees, and food spoilage. A few precautions can keep the fun in your outdoor play.

Keep in mind that young children, particularly babies and toddlers, can burn very quickly with extended exposure to the sun. Limiting the exposure time is your best precaution. Plan outdoor activities before 10:00 a.m. or after 2:00 p.m. or provide some shade with a cabana, an awning, a large umbrella or a big tree. Wearing long sleeves and sun hats is another preventive measure. Finally, if you want to use sunscreen on children, get prior written parental permission before applying it.

Insects may be fun to collect but we don't want to live with them in our indoor environment. Provide screens for all doors used for ventilation. Drilling drainage holes in tire swings and eliminating standing water on your play area will prevent the ponding water the critters need to breed. As with sunscreen, get prior written parental permission and apply insect repellent to children, but avoid products that contain DEET.

Other hazards include insecticides, herbicides, and fertilizers applied to lawns. Know what has been used in your area and take precautions. Have children wear shoes. Wash any exposed skin surfaces. Store outdoor toys carefully and wash them on a regular basis.

Hand washing is for everyone, summer or winter. Children and staff both need to wash hands when coming in from outside. Digging in the dirt and handling yucky worms can bring in many unwanted bacteria for lunch.

And lastly, make your picnic fun. Remember picnics in the yard are a new adventure for young children. You don't need to travel far or carry the food far to have a successful time. Don't take foods that spoil easily. Peanut butter and jelly taste just as good as egg salad and bologna.

The most important element in outdoor fun is you and the supervision you provide. Be alert to hazards. Plan carefully for a good time and it will be a rewarding experience for everyone.

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"THE ENDS OF THE RAINBOW"
CARING FOR INFANTS, TODDLERS AND SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN
A Training Survey for Child Care Providers and Caregivers

Your ideas and thoughts are needed! The purpose of the survey is to determine your interest and needs for training regarding the care of infants, toddlers and school-age children. On the following three pages, you will find a survey developed by the Division of Child Day Care Licensing, Michigan 4C, and Michigan State University.

The MSU College of Human Ecology, Michigan 4C and the Division are exploring the best ways to make additional training opportunities available to Michigan's child care homes and centers. To do this, your input on this survey is critically important. We would appreciate you taking a few minutes during the next two weeks to complete and return the survey! If you have other people who help you care for children, please copy the survey and ask these individuals to complete it as well.

Remove the completed survey from your *Better Homes and Centers* Spring Issue, fold it in half and tape it on the lower edge to create a self-mailer.

Thank you so much for sharing your time and thoughts! A summary of our findings will appear in a future issue of *Better Homes and Centers*.



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"THE ENDS OF THE RAINBOW" TRAINING SURVEY

General Information

A. Where do you provide child care?

- ☐ A1. In a Family Day Care Home
- ☐ A2. In a Group Day Care Home
- ☐ A3. In a Child Care Center/School

B. What is your primary role in the child care setting?

- ☐ B1. Home day care provider
- ☐ B2. Assistant caregiver in a home
- ☐ B3. Caregiver/teacher in a center
- ☐ B4. Center Program Director
- ☐ B5. Facility Administrator

C. Which of the following children's age groups do you currently care for? (Check as many as apply)

- ☐ C1. Infants and toddlers
- ☐ C2. 3 - 4 year olds
- ☐ C3. 5 year olds
- ☐ C4. 6 - 10 year olds
- ☐ C5. Middle school age children

D. Which age group of children are you MOST INTERESTED in learning more about? (Check one)

- ☐ D1. Under 1 year of age
- ☐ D2. 1 - 2 years of age
- ☐ D3. 3 - 4 years of age
- ☐ D4. 5 - 10 years of age
- ☐ D5. 11 - 14 years of age

E. From what sources have you gained the most child care knowledge? (Please number your sources with "1" being the most, "2" the next highest and so on. Mark "NA" if you haven't obtained knowledge from a source.)

- ☐ E1. Statewide conference
- ☐ E2. Regional/local conference
- ☐ E3. Michigan Child Care Futures Training - Basic

- ☐ E4. Michigan Child Care Futures Training - Advanced
- ☐ E5. Michigan Child Care Futures Training - Administrative
- ☐ E6. Community college class
- ☐ E7. Local school's community education class
- ☐ E8. Magazine articles (Parents, Working Mother, Redbook, etc.)
- ☐ E9. Newspaper
- ☐ E10. Other child care providers
- ☐ E11. Newsletters
- ☐ E12. Other _____

F. What things prevent you from participating in training opportunities?

- ☐ F1. Distance
- ☐ F2. Cost too high (Please indicate how much is too much: _____)
- ☐ F3. Hearing about training too late
- ☐ F4. Unable to get in due to the class being full
- ☐ F5. Lack of transportation
- ☐ F6. No child care
- ☐ F7. Lack of interest in the training topic
- ☐ F8. Other _____

G. If training were offered regarding infant/toddler or school age child care would you be interested in possibly participating?

- ☐ G1. Yes, if yes - please continue completing this survey.
- ☐ G2. No, if no - why? _____

If you are not interested in receiving training, you may stop completing this survey at this time. Thank you for the information you have provided. Please return the survey to the address indicated on the front page of the survey. If you are interested in receiving training, please continue completing the survey.

Training Content

H. Please check those areas of infant/toddler or school age training in which you might be interested in participating. Circle any of the listed examples you are specifically interested in. In the "other" space, list any topic(s) in which you are interested.

Infant/Toddler

School Age

☐
☐

H1. **Child Growth & Development** (ex.: Ages and Stages of Development, How to Promote Development, How Children Learn, Responding to Children's Needs, Primary Caregivers, etc.)

Other: _____

☐
☐

H2. **Daily Program for Children** (ex.: Scheduling, Routines, Group Sizes & Times, Equipment, Transitions, Supervision, Indoor and Outdoor Play, etc.)

Other: _____

☐
☐

H3. **Child Guidance & Discipline** (ex.: Building Self-Esteem, Preventing Problems, Handling Problems, Causes of Difficulties, Group Management Techniques, etc.)

Other: _____

☐
☐

H4. **Health & Safety** (ex.: Healthy Environment, Preventing Illness, Spotting Safety Difficulties, Space Planning, etc.)

Other: _____

☐
☐

H5. **Food & Nutrition** (ex.: Safe Food Handling, Nutritional Needs of Children, Mealtimes & Feeding Techniques, Serving Sizes & Cost Management, etc.)

Other: _____

☐
☐

H6. **Parent/Provider & Caregiver Relations** (ex.: Communication, Continuity of Care, Cultural Diversity, etc.)

Other: _____

☐
☐

H7. **Professionalism in Business & Child Care** (ex.: Staff Development, Career Ladders, Balancing Home & Work, Community Relations, etc.)

Other: _____

I. Would you like to be contacted to provide ideas or assistance that could be helpful in the planning of upcoming training for these age groups?

☐ 11. Yes

If yes, please list your:

☐ 12. No

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Training Delivery

- J. In which county would you most prefer to attend training?

Please list county name: _____

- K. In which of the following ways would you prefer to receive training (Check all your preferences)

Training Locations

- ☐ K1. In your child care setting
☐ K2. In your local community
☐ K3. At a regional site covering two or more counties
☐ K4. At one statewide location

Training Formats

- ☐ K5. Through pamphlets and brochures
☐ K6. Through newsletters
☐ K7. At a conference
☐ K8. At a workshop or workshop series
☐ K9. By way of a TV broadcast to a local site
☐ K10. By way of a Cable TV broadcast
☐ K11. Watching a video tape
☐ K12. Through a computer bulletin board

Training Day(s) of the Week

- ☐ K13. Weekday
☐ K14. Weekend
☐ K15. Friday/Saturday combination

Training Time of Day

- ☐ K16. Morning
☐ K17. Afternoon
☐ K18. Full day
☐ K19. Evening

- L. If the training content needed more than one day to cover, how would you prefer the sessions to be scheduled?

- ☐ L1. On consecutive (back to back) days
☐ L2. As a weekly series – one day per week
☐ L3. One day every other week
☐ L4. One day a month
☐ L5. One day every other month

- M. What would motivate you to attend training on a topic that interested you? (Please

number in order of your preference with "1" being your first choice and "8" your last choice)

- ____ M1. Release time from work
____ M2. College academic credit
____ M3. Handout materials
____ M4. Food
____ M5. Transportation
____ M6. Certificate of program completion
____ M7. Continuing education units
____ M8. Other _____

- N. Please indicate the amount you would be willing to pay to cover the cost of training materials, food and presenters for one day of training.

- ☐ N1. Under \$15
☐ N2. \$16 – \$25
☐ N3. \$26 – \$40
☐ N4. Over \$40

There may be other ways to deliver training through new technology that have not been available in the past. To explore these possibilities, would you please answer the following three additional questions.

- O. Have you used a computer?

- ☐ O1. Yes ☐ O2. No

- P. If you have used a computer, which of the following ways have you used it?

- ☐ P1. Word processing
☐ P2. Data entry
☐ P3. Playing games
☐ P4. Contacting computer bulletin boards
☐ P5. Sending messages by E-Mail

- Q. Do you have access to a computer with a modem?

- ☐ Q1. Yes ☐ Q2. No

**THANK YOU FOR TAKING TIME
TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY!**

Please return to:
Jacqueline Wood, Training Manager
Address is on the front page of this survey.

WINTER PLAY

Tom Dunleavy
Licensing Consultant
Marquette County

An often asked question is when can children go out to play in winter weather and how should they be dressed? The answer really depends on how "bad" the weather is. Information from the National Weather Service on temperatures, wind and precipitation should be obtained before outdoor play is allowed. Winter storms and low temperatures have an adverse affect on the human body, as well as the equipment that children play on.

When wind chill is in the *Very Cold*, *Bitter Cold*, or *Extreme Cold* range, children may be in danger in unprotected outdoor play areas. Time limits should be in place for outside play during cold weather. Good judgment should be used to determine whether children should be playing outside during any bad weather with the understanding of the risks during snow squalls, heavy blowing snow, blizzards, sleet, and freezing rain.

The younger and less verbal child may be more at risk during cold weather as he cannot or will have difficulty communicating some of the early signs of frostbite and hypothermia.

Children should be appropriately dressed for outside play. Children should wear layers of loose fitting, lightweight, warm clothing. Layers can be removed or loosened to avoid overheating, perspiration, and subsequent wind chill effects. Low body temperature can occur if a child is overdressed with clothing that allows no room for ventilation. It is important that in very cold weather garments be tightly woven, water repellent and preferably hooded. A child should always wear a hat as half the body heat loss can be from the head area. A child's face may be covered with a garment such as a ski mask to protect his face from the extreme cold. A scarf over the nose and mouth area provides protection against cold weather effects on the child's lungs. Mittens that are snug at the wrist are better than gloves. Make every attempt to keep the children dry.

Outside playground equipment is susceptible to extremes in temperature also. Metal may fatigue and plastic may crack in very cold weather usage. It is important to routinely check equipment for signs of fatigue and replace or place off limits, as appropriate. Equipment that is covered with ice should not be used by children during outdoor play. Some equipment is easily covered with tarps or plastic to protect against ice and snow build up. There are certain times when it would be appropriate to call your equipment "off limits" to children during outdoor play. Outdoor play



areas should be kept free from snow drifts and kept clear of excess snow to ensure freedom of movement for children in care.

It is also important during snowy and icy weather to slow the children down as much as possible during outdoor play for their safety. At present, there are minimum caregiver ratios for children for outdoor play, and it might be a good idea that the adult ratio be increased to include other caregivers during winter weather conditions.

If school yards, parks or other approved outdoor play areas are utilized, keep a weather eye out for storms and cold that adversely effect children and be aware of reduced visibility problems that are associated with these storms. Children should not be near streets and traffic during low visibility and ice conditions.

It is suggested that caregivers have a radio available that is tuned to NOAA Weather Radio or other reputable radio-weather stations to monitor weather during the winter season. Some radios are automatically turned on by tone if bad weather is being forecasted. By monitoring weather and if outdoor play is not to occur, planning can be done for indoor large muscle play.

Have a good, safe winter!

Source: National Weather Service NOAA, Negaunee, Michigan Station

GOOD IDEAS FOR SMALL SPACES

Diane Sparks, Director

*Grand Rapids Community College Laboratory Preschool
Kent County*

Do the words "postage stamp size" give people an idea about your outdoor play space? Many child-care centers located in downtown or crowded urban areas face the challenge of limited usable outdoor playgrounds. If there is enough room, either it is not fenced, or else it is in constant need of cleaning up from neighborhood dumping. If it is protected, it is often too small to be much use to a large group. How do you provide appropriate outdoor planning and activities when you don't have a place to do it?

Since our on-site playground does not meet the minimum space requirements of 1,200 square feet, we use local school and neighborhood parks in addition to our adjacent playground. We also tried to maximize that space. Our on-site space provides 775 square feet of playground — 75 feet long by 10 feet wide, wedged between two tall buildings. We had two long narrow climbers that were usable by 3 children each, a tepee for 3 children and a sand area that was about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the length of the playground. Unless you have a very small group, that is not very usable or enjoyable space.

When funding was made available for playground renovation, we were thrilled! Working with a person from a playground equipment company, we designed and redesigned the uprights, tubes, platforms, walls and climbing bars until we had a workable plan. Her previous experience was invaluable in making choices that would fit our playground. The result is a long, in-line structure that has a slide, crawl tube, climbing bars, a bridge and several walls offering a steering wheel, a telephone and a bubble window. It offers

many more opportunities for creative large motor play as well as room for 10 to 12 children.

We also had a dump truck load of sand added to increase the sand space to $\frac{1}{2}$ of the playground. In that area we put a plexiglass easel for outdoor art experiences.

This was an expensive investment, but we as a staff felt a better one could not have been made. We can now use the playground with our toddlers, 2½ year olds, 3 year olds, and if it is a small group, even with our 4 and 5 year olds.

Our older groups regularly walk to an area school

that is 7 blocks away and use their truly wonderful playground while the elementary children are in class. If you are really lucky, you will find a principal like the one at this school who would come out to say hello and let us know that restrooms

were always available to us. We all know that with preschool children, at least three will need to use the bathroom immediately upon arriving at a place without them!

We have access to the Grand Rapids Community College outdoor running track which is a great place to take all the groups, from toddlers through the four and five year olds. It allows us space for tricycles, balls, wagons and for large areas to run. Though again we have to walk several blocks, the track is an ideal spot for activities usually thought to be unavailable in a downtown outdoor setting. Working with a high school could provide your center with some alternate outdoor space that may be fenced in and gives you much needed space for larger groups outside.

Aside from having unlimited funds for large equipment, the best solution we have found to limited outdoor spaces is creativity and working together with your neighborhood schools and playgrounds.



SEPARATE PLAYGROUNDS FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS

*Carol Tresik, Executive Director
The Learning Tree Child Care Center
Wayne County*

As more children are spending ten and eleven hours a day in child care, outdoor play has taken on a more vital role in their daily programs. Child care professionals strive to provide quality room environments that are safe, exciting, challenging, and most importantly age appropriate. Yet when it comes to planning outdoor space, we often overlook many of these things. For example, we would never put a 15 month toddler in a classroom of five year olds, but we expect children of all ages to share one outdoor space.

Too often when planning outdoor environments, we look at the initial cost and not the long term benefits. Planning separate outdoor areas for infant and toddlers may cost more at first, but will result in better outcomes for children as well as for staff. Some of the reasons we decided to plan separate outdoor areas follow.

First, separate areas provide for developmentally appropriate activities. Infants need a chance to explore their environment through touch. They should feel free to roam on the warm grass, wiggle their toes in the mud on a rainy day, smell the flowers and listen to leaves rustle. Older children need the freedom to run, jump and climb without the fear of stepping on little ones. And we all know toddlers dump and pour — over and over again. If the sand box is full of four, five and six year olds, your toddlers may just have to find somewhere else to dig — usually a planted flower bed.

Second, having equipment that is age appropriate is a necessity. If all your equipment is too high, too big or just plain overwhelming, little ones won't feel confident to take risks. Those who are on the more adventurous side and decide to take a risk despite the odds make chances for injuries a sure thing! While risks add fun to the play experience and challenge the child to try new skills, it must be healthy risk taking. If the equipment is too small for the older children, chances are they will ignore the obvious and play on it anyway. Injuries may result, if not to the children, it may be to your equipment.

Equipment and materials need not be costly. When planning outdoor space, view it as a classroom. In fact, indoor equipment can be taken outside for double duty. Also, looking at the same piece of equipment but in a different way can provide for different ages. Old truck tires laying flat are sandboxes for toddlers. When they are upright, they become a climber for preschoolers.

Finally, separate playgrounds can lower your staff's stress level. Infant caregivers can put their babies on a blanket, read stories and sing songs without being drowned out by a lively game of kickball. They are also less stressed if they are not constantly having to tell children what they can and cannot play on.

Quality programs extend beyond the walls of the child care building. Providing separate outdoor play areas meets the needs of the children entrusted to us. With their outdoor play time limited, shouldn't it be the best we can provide?



A 10 STEP STRATEGY FOR COMPLETING AN INFANT/TODDLER PLAYGROUND

Sally Householder, Director
Eleanor Miller Child Care Center
Kalamazoo Public Schools

In 1985 our center was in need of a safe outdoor play area with appropriate play equipment for our young children. As the new director I inherited a beautiful, professionally developed plan with only two major problems. First, there was no money and second, the plan was designed for children 2½ through 6. We provide child care for the infants and toddlers of teen parents.

My problems became even more complicated when I soon discovered there wasn't much out there in playground equipment and design for this age group. Over a nine year period we (and I do mean we — staff, parents, neighborhood residents and our licensing consultant) have developed a model site that is shown with pride to frequent visitors and more importantly thoroughly used and enjoyed by our children.

I hope the following 10 Step Strategy will assist you in your journey. Good luck.

1. **Create Your Dream Plan** — Make a decision that the space you want to designate is for infants and toddlers only, if you are also working with older kids.

Look at every catalog you can get your hands on. Visit other programs. Make your own model with picture cut outs of equipment pieces. Don't forget the landscaping. Put this on your office wall.

2. **Remember You Will Always Need More Money** — Select one equipment item a year (two if you're lucky). Put that item in the budget. It will only become a priority if you make it your focus. Look around your own community for a funding source. It does not always have to be a foundation. Our local Board of Realtors Association gave us \$500 after we demonstrated to them what an asset this project was to the local neighborhood. We also received a National Garden Council Award. This grant has allowed us to landscape with donated products from leading garden companies. There may be a local garden club that would donate time, bulbs and equipment to your project. Our United Way Agency has a collaborative effort with a local foundation that fosters youth involvement. Check yours out. It may be willing to focus teens and money your way.

3. **Remember Infants And Toddlers Are Truly Different Than Preschoolers** — Don't assume that they will limit their own activity and won't climb the climber. If they do not have their own space,

your nagging safety concerns and your staff complaints won't go away.

4. **Budget For Strollers First** — This will make your staff happy as well as the children. Invest in nothing less than a 3 seater unless you live in dreamland and have a one adult to one child ratio.

5. **Never Pay Retail** — Find out the equipment manufacturer. Ask stores for model numbers and go directly to the source. We found Italian strollers at a children's store but ended up going directly to the U.S. distributor. This is one time a non-profit status can work to your advantage.

6. **Redesign The Design** — Every playground will have a major piece. Talk with the company about what you like or don't like. Most have been designed for older children. Suggest things that will work based on your experience and your needs. For example, drop a swing section and add a crawl through tunnel, sink a standard size 2 bench picnic table to a toddler's height.

7. **Sharpen Your Sales Pitch** — Invite the companies of your major equipment purchases to use your play area as a demonstration site. Explain why and how you are unique and how fast the market for infant and toddler centers is growing. They won't give it to you free but if you are convincing you could receive a substantial discount.

8. **Invest In Soft Surfaces** — Playground safety standards are changing all the time. Don't let your center become a liability example. Follow manufacturer's specific installation requirements. Most require soft surfaces for specific areas such as the end of a slide or under a rocking toy. The new rubberized cushioned materials are expensive but worth it in the long run. Remember to budget this with your other cost and use Step 7.

9. **Remain Flexible** — The best plan is always evolving. It will become better. Not being able to purchase everything at once can work to your benefit. By the time we were ready to purchase a riding and rocking unit, we had better design choices. Placement in our playground space remained the same but we now have a more versatile and prettier piece of equipment.

10. **Never Be Afraid To Ask For Help** — You will be surprised at how many people will help a worthy project. Put an ad in your volunteer agency newsletter for a retired carpenter or cement worker, etc. The trick is being specific. Know exactly what you want done, when and where.

Sally Householder is currently the Director of the Eleanor Miller Child Care Center for Kalamazoo Public Schools. She has been an Early Childhood Educator and Advocate for 20 years. She and her staff provide early care and education to 110 infant and toddlers of teen mothers annually.

PROVIDER'S CORNER



YOUR NUMBER IS UP!

Carole M. Grates, Area Manager
Child Day Care Licensing
Genesee County

By now you have received a letter from the Department of Social Services (DSS) informing you of your new license number. In fact, some of you may even have received two letters. What's happening and why all the changes?

In November, the Division of Child Day Care Licensing went *online*. This means we can finally talk to the rest of the DSS through our statewide computer system. For you it means new numbers. Hopefully this article will help you understand the system.

All providers of care will have at least two numbers — a *licensee I.D. number* and a *license number*. Your *licensee I.D. number* identifies you as a licensee and it is given to you as an individual or corporation. For organizations that have one sponsor but several child care center sites, this *licensee I.D. number* identifies the sponsor. For individuals who may have a foster care home license and a child care home license, this *licensee I.D.* identifies you as an individual who has more than one license. This allows the Department to have a history of all licenses a person or corporation may have or has ever had in this state. Once you are enrolled, this *licensee I.D. number* never changes regardless of new or different licenses, a name change, or an address change. Like Roseanne, you will always be Roseanne.

The second number that a licensee will have is a *license number*. This number is given to a specific licensee at a specific address, which is the address of the facility where care is provided. For child care

providers, this number will begin with DF for family child care homes, DG for group child care homes, or DC for child care centers. It will be followed by two digits that identify your county and seven digits that identify your facility. For example, a child care home in Genesee county will have DF(home)25(Genesee county)0012345(the facility identification number). Therefore the license number for your home would be DF250012345. If you would move to a new home in a different county, your DF number would change but your *licensee I.D. number* would not. Like Roseanne, you would keep Roseanne but change Barr to Arnold or whoever is the latest lucky fellow.

Those providers who receive reimbursement from DSS for child care will also have a third number that is the *provider number*. This number indicates you have agreed to accept the rate of reimbursement offered by the state for the type of care you are providing for those families that are eligible for assistance. This is the number you use when talking to the family's MOST worker or payments worker when you have questions about payment issues. Your *license number* is no longer the number used by DSS for reimbursement.

Now just to confuse things a little, use your *license number* **not** your *provider number* when talking with your USDA child care food program consultant. Here is a little chart to keep you on track:

Child Care Licensing Consultant	License Number
Payments/MOST worker	Provider Number
USDA Child Care Food Program	License Number

If you have any questions about your numbers, call your licensing consultant about your *license number*. Call the payments or MOST worker about your *provider number*. And if you happen to make a mistake and call the wrong person, we'll see that you get on the right track. We are here to help!

RESOURCES: Outdoor Playground

Caring Space, Learning Places: Children's Environments That Work, Jim Greenman, Exchange Press, Inc.

Guidelines for Parents — Playground Safety Pamphlet, American Academy of Pediatrics, Division of Publications, 141 Northwest Point Blvd., P.O. Box 927, Elk Grove Village, Ill. 60009-0927

Handbook for Public Playground Safety, U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Washington D.C. 20207.

Planning Environments for Young Children — Physical Space, Sybil Kritchovsky and Elizabeth Prescott, with Lee Walling, NAEYC.

"Planning for Outdoor Play," Michael Henniger, Young Children, May 1994.

Playground 101 — Everything You Need to Know About Selecting Playground Equipment, edited by Frances Wallach, Ea.D., Distributed by Play Designs, 1-800-327-7571.

Playground Safety Manual, Tom Jambor and S. Donald Palmer.

"Safe, Fun Playgrounds," Susan S. Aronson, M.D., Exchange, May 1988.

"Child Care: Outdoor Safety on the Playground" Video, Bergwell, #C20, Bergwell Productions, Inc., Garden City, New York 11530.

"What's Going on Out Here? An Evaluation Tool for Your Playground," Jim Dempsey, Eric Strickland and Joe Frost, Exchange, May 1993.

6. Public hearings will then be held around the State (1-2 months depending on number and location)

7. This may require a possible redraft of proposed rules as a result of public input may be needed. (2 months)

8. LSB/AG must review and certify legality of new rules. (4-6 weeks)

Note: Any major changes must be retyped and resubmitted for informal approval (new public hearings may be required) which would take the process back to step 2.

9. Within 2 years of the last public hearing, a report must be prepared and sent to the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR) for approval. (2 months, with possible 6 months extension)

10. JCAR holds additional committee meetings allowing for public comment on the proposed rules. These committee meetings could also result in redrafting the proposed rules. (3-6 months)

11. Following JCAR's approval, the rules are filed with the Secretary of State.

At present the proposed rules are in the process of being put into a draft format. The earliest the rules

could be published in the Michigan Register would be next fall. Therefore, public hearings would not be able to be held until then. Notices of the time and location of public hearings are published in local newspapers. In addition, the Division will notify all child care center providers when the hearings will be held. The proposed rules or summary of the proposed changes will be available to the public by request prior to the hearings.

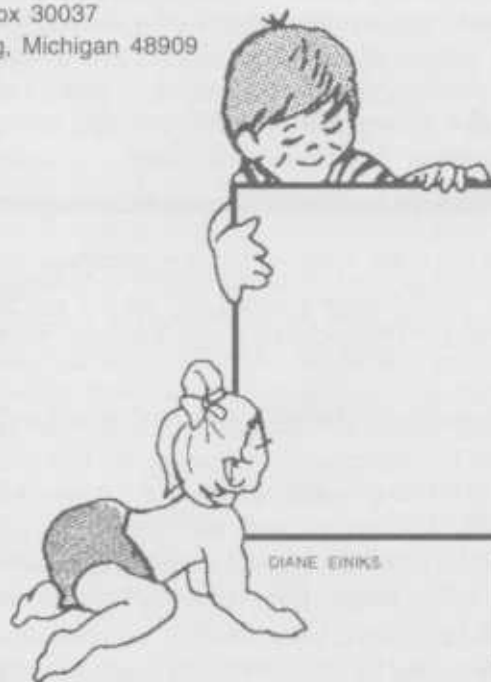
Day care center providers, parents of young children using day care centers, and other interested parties are encouraged to review the proposed rules and to attend the public hearings. It is at these hearings that input regarding the proposed rules may be heard. All comments and suggestions are taken into consideration in preparing the final draft which will be used to continue the promulgation process.

This issue of Better Homes and Centers is dealing with playground safety. The Ad Hoc Committee has recommended that outdoor equipment higher than 30 inches have 6 inches of loose cushioning material in the area under and around the equipment where children are likely to fall. Obviously, this is a preliminary suggestion, but would provide a minimum of protection in these situations. This is just an example of how rule revision begins as it winds its way through the rule-making process.

Ted deWalt

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